

REMARKS

Claims 1, 2 and 4-24 are pending in this application. By this Amendment, claim 1 and 4 are amended. No new matter is added. Claim 3 is canceled without prejudice to, or disclaimer of, the subject matter recited in that claim. Reconsideration of the application based on the above amendments and the following remarks is respectfully requested.

Applicants thank the Examiner for the indication that claims 3, 12, 14, 16, 17, 19, 20, 22 and 24 recite allowable subject matter. Claim 1 is amended to incorporate the subject matter of claim 3 thereby rendering claim 1, and the claims dependent therefrom, allowable.

Entry of the amendments is proper under 37 CFR §1.116(b)(1) since the amendments place the application in condition for allowance for the reasons discussed. The amendments are necessary and were not earlier presented because they are made in response to arguments raised in the final rejection. Entry of the amendments is thus respectfully requested.

The Office Action rejects claims 1, 2, 4, 8, 10, 11 and 13 under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) over U.S. Patent No. 6,121,634 to Sato et al. (hereinafter "Sato"); rejects claims 1, 2, 5-7, 9-11, 16, 18, 21 and 23 under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) over EP 908988A to Matsumoto et al. (hereinafter "Matsumoto"); and rejects claim 1, 2, 5, 8-10 and 15 under 35 U.S.C. §102(e) over U.S. Patent No. 6,597,017 to Seiko et al. (hereinafter "Seiko"). These rejections are respectfully traversed.

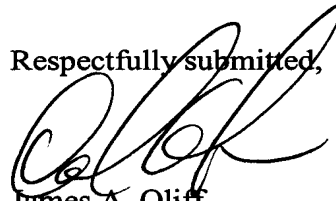
The Office Action, at page 5, paragraph 6, acknowledges that claim 3 recites allowable subject matter and would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the features of the base claim and any intervening claims. Claim 1 is amended to include the features of claim 3 and claim 3 is canceled.

Accordingly, reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejections of the pending claims under 35 U.S.C. §102 are respectfully requested.

In view of the foregoing, it is respectfully submitted that this application is in condition for allowance. Favorable reconsideration and prompt allowance of claims 1, 2 and 4-24 are earnestly solicited.

Should the Examiner believe that anything further would be desirable in order to place this application in even better condition for allowance, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned at the telephone number set forth below.

Respectfully submitted,



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